



ADVISORY: EMERGENCY SATELLITE LOCATOR DEVICES

Using the **SOS** or **911** button on a satellite-locator device carries the same responsibility as dialing **911** from a telephone. Use these devices only to request help in a true emergency. Ask yourself: *are you willing to put other people at risk to solve your problem?*

Read this advisory before your trip in order to understand your responsibilities and the consequences of your actions. Know that rescues are risky to personnel and expensive to agencies. Rescuer safety is **ALWAYS** our first priority. Even if you activate the emergency beacon on a SPOT, PLB, or similar device, response may take longer than 24 hours depending on weather, time of day, your location, and other factors.

Responsibilities before leaving home:

- Know and consider your personal skills and limitations when planning your wilderness travel. Wilderness is a place for personal challenge, responsibility, and a high degree of self-reliance. Are you ready to deal with the dynamic hazards of wilderness?
 - If you choose to carry a hand-held electronic signaling device, be familiar with its operation, limitations, and frequency of failure to transmit. **Do not rely on it** to summon rescue personnel or notify family you are "OK". Read the instructions for your device; keep them with you. Understand how it works and what services provided by the manufacturer must be activated and purchased. If required, register your device and provide **all** the information requested.
 - Some devices (e.g. SPOT) ask for a primary contact in the case of an emergency activation. *Do not start your trip* until that person has complete details, including:
 - Your intended route; alternate routes you might take; when and where you plan to start and end; knowledge about your experience level; and description of gear you are taking.
 - Full names of all members of your party and *their* emergency contacts.
 - **The difference between *HELP*, and *SOS/911* on a SPOT-type device:**
 - SOS/911 - for a true emergency:** immediate response (through On-Star System)
 - Help:** Not an emergency, signals your chosen contacts, and they already know what to do (E.g. hike or drive to your location, etc.)
 - I'm OK:** Signals your chosen contacts. One or two days of no signal is common and not necessarily an emergency. *Transmission in wilderness may be very inconsistent.*
- The National Park Service (NPS) will not respond to **HELP** as an emergency unless we have additional information. If you have a true emergency, activate **SOS/911**. *Share this information with all chosen contacts.*
- How to access your tracking webpage, including login and password. Knowing your prior waypoints or tracking information may help the NPS to respond.

Responsibilities during your trip:

- Your knowledge, experience, and equipment will contribute most to your survival. Can you self-rescue or get help from other hikers? Do *not* signal **SOS/911** unless it is a true emergency, but do not be afraid to signal if you know it is justified.
- If you activate **SOS/911** and it is safe to stay where you are, *don't leave*. It may be harder for rescuers to find you if you move. Stopping the **SOS/911** signal or activating the **OK** signal may not cancel a response, so stay in the areas where you activated the **SOS/911** even if the emergency has passed.

Responsibilities after your trip or emergency

- If you activated the **SOS/911** but have not been contacted by the NPS or other agency personnel, *call us immediately* once you are out of the wilderness; we may be looking for you. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks' 24-hour dispatch phone number is **559-565-3195**.
- Let your contact(s) know as soon as you are out of the wilderness and not in need of help.
Your locator device is only a tool. Activate *SOS/911* only in a true emergency, and the NPS will do everything possible to help you.